Environmental Assessment Checklist

Project Name: Refuse Collection Site at Libby Unit
Proposed Implementation Date: Fall, 2016
Proponent: Libby Unit, Northwest Land Office, Montana DNRC
County: Lincoln

Type and Purpose of Action

Description of Proposed Action:

The Libby Unit of the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) is responding to a proposal by Lincoln County proposing an easement be granted authorizing the placement and fencing of a refuse collection site at Libby Unit. The project is located 14 miles east of Libby (refer to Attachments vicinity map A-**1** and project map A-**2**) and includes the following sections:

Beneficiary	Legal Description	Total Acres	Treated Acres
Common Schools	**T30N R29W Sec. 16**	**<1/2**	**<1/2**
Public Buildings			
MSU 2nd Grant			
MSU Morrill			
Eastern College-MSU/Western College-U of M			
Montana Tech			
University of Montana			
School for the Deaf and Blind			
Pine Hills School			
Veterans Home			
Public Land Trust			
Acquired Land			

Objectives of the project include:

- History:
  - The refuse collection site (green boxes) at Libby Unit has been in place over 20 years.
  - They have been authorized under an memorandum of agreement
  - Lincoln County has secured grant funding from MFWP to construct bear proof fencing around the site.
  - Lincoln County will not expend those funds until a more permanent authorization is formalized (i.e. easement)
  - This site routinely is raided by bears causing many man-hours of DNRC and Lincoln County employees clean-up time.

- Objectives:
  - Grant Lincoln County an easement authorizing the placement of this refuge collection site
  - Fence the site for protection of people and wildlife

Proposed activities include:

Action	Quantity
Proposed Harvest Activities	# Acres
Clearcut	
Seed Tree	
Shelterwood	
Selection	
Commercial Thinning	
Salvage	
Total Treatment Acres	
Proposed Forest Improvement Treatment	# Acres
Pre-commercial Thinning	
Planting	
Proposed Road Activities	# Miles
New permanent road construction	
New temporary road construction	
Road maintenance	
Road reconstruction	
Road abandoned	
Road reclaimed	
Other Activities	
Grant easement for refuse collection site	<1/2 ac

Duration of Activities:	perpetuity
Implementation Period:	Fall 2016

The lands involved in this proposed project are held in trust by the State of Montana. (Enabling Act of February 22, 1889; 1972 Montana Constitution, Article X, Section 11). The Board of Land Commissioners and the DNRC are required by law to administer these trust lands to produce the largest measure of reasonable and legitimate return over the long run for the beneficiary institutions (Section 77-1-202, MCA).

The DNRC would manage lands involved in this project in accordance with:

- The State Forest Land Management Plan (DNRC 1996),
- Administrative Rules for Forest Management (ARM 36.11.401 through 471),
- The Montana DNRC Forested State Trust Lands Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) (DNRC 2010)
- and all other applicable state and federal laws.

Project Development

SCOPING:

- DATE:
  - September 2016
- PUBLIC SCOPED:
  - The scoping notice was posted on the DNRC Website: http://dnrc.mt.gov/PublicInterest/Notices/Default.asp
  - Weyerhauser Co. (neighboring landowner)
- AGENCIES SCOPED:
  - USFS – Libby District
  - Lincoln County
  - Montana Department of Fish Wildlife and Parks
- COMMENTS RECEIVED:
  - How many: 2
  - Concerns: both comments were in support of the proposal especially the fencing
  - Results (how were concerns addressed): The project as designed will incorporate the needed fencing.

DNRC specialists were consulted, including: Jeremy Rank, project leader; Leah Breidinger, Wildlife Biologist; Marc Vessar, Hydrologist;

Internal and external issues and concerns were incorporated into project planning and design and will be implemented in associated contracts.

OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED: *(Conservation Easements, Army Corps of Engineers, road use permits, etc.)*

- **United States Fish & Wildlife Service-** DNRC is managing the habitats of threatened and endangered species on this project by implementing the Montana DNRC Forested Trust Lands HCP and the associated Incidental Take Permit that was issued by the United States Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) in February of 2012 under Section 10 of the Endangered Species Act. The HCP identifies specific conservation strategies for managing the habitats of grizzly bear, Canada lynx, and three fish species: bull trout, westslope cutthroat trout, and Columbia redband trout. This project complies with the HCP. The HCP can be found at www.dnrc.mt.gov/HCP.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

No-Action Alternative: Do not grant easement to Lincoln County, continue the status quo. The site will continue to be a bear attractant, and will continue to cause clean-up issues for DNRC and Lincoln County employees.

Action Alternative : Grant easement to Lincoln County authorizing the placement and fencing of approximately ½ acre for a refuse collection site.

Impacts on the Physical Environment

Evaluation of the impacts on the No-Action and Action Alternatives including **direct, secondary, and cumulative** impacts on the Physical Environment.

VEGETATION:

Vegetation Existing Conditions: The location is currently being used as a refuse collection site. There is approximately ½ acre cleared and graveled area where the green boxes are placed. There are weeds that sprout up behind the green boxes.

Vegetation	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
No-Action														
Noxious Weeds		x			x				x					
Rare Plants	x				x				x					
Vegetative community	x				x				x					
Old Growth	x				x				x					
Action														
Noxious Weeds		x			x				x				yes	v-1
Rare Plants	x				x				x					
Vegetative community	x				x				x					
Old Growth	x				x				x					

Comments: The site is a graveled parking / staging area and weeds are a constant issue. Herbicides are used annually by the USFS, DNRC or the County to control the weeds around the green boxes.

Vegetation Mitigations: Lincoln County and DNRC would work in concert to continue addressing the weeds that grow around the refuse collection site.

SOIL DISTURBANCE AND PRODUCTIVITY:

Soil Disturbance and Productivity Existing Conditions: The existing condition of the site is a disturbed state. The soil has been graded flat and capped with several inches of gravel and is routinely graded.

Soil Disturbance and Productivity	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
No-Action														
Physical Disturbance (Compaction and Displacement)	X				X							X	N	S-1
Erosion	X				X					X			Y	S-2

Soil Disturbance and Productivity	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
Nutrient Cycling	X				X							X	N	S-3
Slope Stability	X				X				X					
Soil Productivity	X				X							X	N	S-4
Action														
Physical Disturbance (Compaction and Displacement)	X				X							X	N	S-1
Erosion	X				X					X			Y	S-2
Nutrient Cycling	X				X							X	N	S-3
Slope Stability	X				X				X					
Soil Productivity	X				X							X	N	S-4

Comments
S-1—Soil has been disturbed for several decades. Currently, the site is graveled and driven on several times daily.
S-2—Erosion has been mitigated with gravel.
S-3—Nutrient cycling no longer occurs at this site due to the current and proposed use.
S-4—Soil productivity has been heavily impacted by compaction. While the site is no longer used for timber growth, it is serving well in its current use.

*Soil Mitigations:*none

WATER QUALITY AND QUANTITY:

This site is located more than 700 feet from any surface water feature. Additionally, several roads and areas of established vegetation can be found between the project site and surface water features. Due to the distance from water, topography and no change from the current use, cumulative effects would be very low and likely immeasurable.

Water Quality and Quantity Existing Conditions: The project area is located near the confluence of the Kootenai River and the Fisher River. Distance from the closest point of either water body to the project site is at least 700 feet. The Fisher River Road, Highway 37, and two graveled roads also separate the project site from surface water features.

Water Quality & Quantity	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
No-Action														
Water Quality	X				X				X					
Water Quantity	X				X				X					
Action														
Water Quality	X				X				X					
Water Quantity	X				X				X					

Comments: Due to the distance from water and topography of the area measurable impacts are not expected to water quality or quantity.

Water Quality & Quantity Mitigations: none

FISHERIES:

Fisheries Existing Conditions: The site is located approximately 700 feet from the Fisher River and 800 feet from the Kootenai River. While native fish—including bull trout—are found in these waters, impacts to fisheries or fish habitat would have a very low risk of occurring.

No-Action: No direct or indirect impacts would occur to affected fish species or affected fisheries resources beyond those described in Fisheries Existing Conditions. Cumulative effects (other related past and present factors; other future, related actions; and any impacts described in Fisheries Existing Conditions) would continue to occur.

Action Alternative (see Fisheries table below):

Fisheries	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
No-Action														
Sediment	X				X				X					
Flow Regimes	X				X				X					
Woody Debris	X				X				X					
Stream Shading	X				X				X					
Stream Temperature	X				X				X					
Connectivity	X				X				X					
Populations	X				X				X					
Action														
Sediment	X				X				X					
Flow Regimes	X				X				X					
Woody Debris	X				X				X					
Stream Shading	X				X				X					
Stream Temperature	X				X				X					
Connectivity	X				X				X					
Populations	X				X				X					

Comments: No drainage issues that would affect fish species or habitat.

Fisheries Mitigations: none

WILDLIFE:

No-Action: The county refuse site would remain on DNRC land, but an easement would not be granted to Lincoln County and the area would not be fenced.

Action Alternative (see Wildlife table below): An easement would be granted to Lincoln County authorizing the placement of an existing refuse collection site at Libby Unit which has been in place for 20 years. After obtaining an easement, the county would fence the site to reduce conflicts with wildlife.

Wildlife	Impact												Can Impact be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
Threatened and Endangered Species														
Grizzly bear *(Ursus arctos)* Habitat: Recovery areas, security from human activity		X				X				X			NA	WI-1
Canada lynx *(Felix lynx)* Habitat: Subalpine fir habitat types, dense sapling, old forest, deep snow zone	X				X				X					
Wolverine *(Gulo gulo)*	X				X				X					
Sensitive Species														
Bald eagle *(Haliaeetus leucocephalus)* Habitat: Late-successional forest within 1 mile of open water	X				X				X					
Black-backed woodpecker *(Picoides arcticus)* Habitat: Mature to old burned or beetle-infested forest	X				X				X					
Coeur d'Alene salamander *(Plethodon idahoensis)* Habitat: Waterfall spray zones, talus near cascading streams	X				X				X					
Columbian sharp-tailed grouse *(Tympanuchus Phasianellus columbianus)*	X				X				X					

Wildlife	Impact												Can Impact be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
Habitat: Grassland, shrubland, riparian, agriculture														
Common loon *(Gavia immer)* Habitat: Cold mountain lakes, nest in emergent vegetation	X				X				X					
Fisher *(Martes pennanti)* Habitat: Dense mature to old forest less than 6,000 feet in elevation and riparian	X				X				X					
Flammulated owl *(Otus flammeolus)* Habitat: Late-successional ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir forest	X				X				X					
Gray Wolf *(Canis lupus)* Habitat: Ample big game populations, security from human activities	X				X				X					
Harlequin duck *(Histrionicus histrionicus)* Habitat: White-water streams, boulder and cobble substrates	X				X				X					
Northern bog lemming *(Synaptomys borealis)* Habitat: Sphagnum meadows, bogs, fens with thick moss mats	X				X				X					
Peregrine falcon *(Falco peregrinus)* Habitat: Cliff features near open foraging areas and/or wetlands	X				X				X					

Wildlife	Impact												Can Impact be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
Pileated woodpecker *(Dryocopus pileatus)* Habitat: Late-successional ponderosa pine and larch-fir forest	X				X				X					
Townsend's big-eared bat *(Plecotus townsendii)* Habitat: Caves, caverns, old mines	X				X				X					
Big Game Species														
Elk	X				X				X					
Whitetail	X				X				X					
Mule Deer	X				X				X					
Other														

Comments:
WI-1: The Project Area is located outside of grizzly bear recovery and non-recovery occupied habitat (*Wittinger 2002*). However, grizzly bears may travel through the area at any time. Granting an easement to Lincoln County would allow the county to construct fencing around the existing refuse site with grant money, benefiting bears and other wildlife by removing the attractant and reducing the likelihood of human/bear conflict.

Literature Cited:
Wittinger, W. 2002. Grizzly bear distribution outside of recovery zones. *In* Unpublished memorandum on file at USDA Forest Service, Region 1, Missoula, MT.

AIR QUALITY:

Air Quality	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
No-Action														
Smoke	x				x				x					
Dust		x			x				x					
Action														
Smoke	x				x				x					

Air Quality	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
Dust		x			x				x				yes	AQ-1

Comments: There is very little dust associated with this use at this site because of the gravel surfacing and the slow rate of speed vehicles travel while using the site.

Air Quality Mitigations: AW-1: continue to maintain a gravel surface, fencing will slow vehicles down even more, further reducing the dust generated.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES / AESTHETICS / DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:

Will Alternative result in potential impacts to:	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
No-Action														
Historical or Archaeological Sites	x				x				x					
Aesthetics			x			x			x					
Demands on Environmental Resources of Land, Water, or Energy	x				x				x					
Action														
Historical or Archaeological Sites	x				x				x					
Aesthetics		x				x							yes	A-1
Demands on Environmental Resources of Land, Water, or Energy														

Comments: Aesthetics are poor already with garbage dumpsters at the site but the aesthetics can be very poor when the garbage has been spread around the area by bears, wind and ravens. Fencing will eliminate the spreading around of garbage by bears and reduce the spread by wind and birds.

Mitigations: A-1: Aesthetics will always be poor using the site as a garbage collection location, but the fencing will create more tidy appearance and greatly reduce the spread of wayward garbage.

OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA: *List other studies, plans or projects on this tract. Determine cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of current private, state or federal actions in the analysis area, and from future proposed state actions in the analysis area that are under MEPA review (scoped) or permitting review by any state agency.*

- No other known environmental documents are pertinent to the area.

Impacts on the Human Population

Evaluation of the impacts on the proposed action including **direct, secondary, and cumulative** impacts on the Human Population.

Will Alternative result in potential impacts to:	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
No-Action														
Health and Human Safety		x			x				x				yes	HP-1
Industrial, Commercial and Agricultural Activities and Production	x				x				x					
Quantity and Distribution of Employment	x				x				x					
Local Tax Base and Tax Revenues	x				x				x					
Demand for Government Services		x			x				x				yes	HP-1
Access To and Quality of Recreational and Wilderness Activities	x				x				x					
Density and Distribution of population and housing	x				x				x					
Social Structures and Mores	x				x				x					
Cultural Uniqueness and Diversity	x				x				x					
Action														
Health and Human Safety		x			x				x					
Industrial, Commercial and Agricultural Activities and Production	x				x				x					
Quantity and Distribution of Employment	x				x				x					
Local Tax Base and Tax Revenues	x				x				x					
Demand for Government Services	x				x				x					
Access To and Quality of Recreational and	x				x				x					

Will Alternative result in potential impacts to:	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
Wilderness Activities														
Density and Distribution of population and housing	x				x				x					
Social Structures and Mores	x				x				x					
Cultural Uniqueness and Diversity	x				x				x					

Comments: Health and Human Safety is always a concern when dealing with sanitary refuse as is the number of man-hours the DNRC and Lincoln County expend cleaning up the site after a bear has spread the garbage around.

Mitigations: HP-1: Fencing will greatly reduce or eliminate the spreading of garbage around the collection site, thus reducing the need for DNRC and County government employees to routinely clean the area around the collection site from bear's distribution of trash, and this cleaning up of the trash introduced a health and human safety issue to those cleaning the site.

Locally Adopted Environmental Plans and Goals: *List State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, and other zoning or management plans, and identify how they would affect this project.*

- There are no known locally adopted environmental plans or goals for the site.

Other Appropriate Social and Economic Circumstances:
Costs, revenues and estimates of return are estimates intended for relative comparison of alternatives. They are not intended to be used as absolute estimates of return. The estimated stumpage is based on comparable sales analysis. This method compares recent sales to find a market value for stumpage. These sales have similar species, quality, average diameter, product mix, terrain, date of sale, distance from mills, road building and logging systems, terms of sale, or anything that could affect a buyer's willingness to pay.

No Action: The No Action alternative would not generate any return to the trust at this time.

Action: The granting of an easement to Lincoln County would generate additional revenue for the Common School Trust. The estimated return to the trust for the proposed harvest is approximately $875 based on an estimated value of ½ acre and an overall land valuation of $1750 per acre. Costs, revenues, and estimates of return are estimates intended for relative comparison of alternatives, they are not intended to be used as absolute estimates of return.

References

DNRC 1996. State forest land management plan: final environmental impact statement (and appendixes). Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Forest Management Bureau, Missoula, Montana.

DNRC. 2010. Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation Forested State Trust Lands Habitat Conservation Plan: Final EIS, Volume II, Forest Management Bureau, Missoula, Montana.

Does the proposed action involve potential risks or adverse effects that are uncertain but extremely harmful if they were to occur?

- No

Does the proposed action have impacts that are individually minor, but cumulatively significant or potentially significant?

- No

Environmental Assessment Checklist Prepared By:

Name: Jeremy Rank
Title: Management Forester
Date: October 3, 2016

HCP checklist not required for this project JR

Finding

Alternative Selected

I find that the action alternative as proposed meets the intent of the project objectives. It complies with all pertinent environmental laws, DNRC State Forest Land Management Plan, DNRC Habitat Conservation Plan, and a consensus of professional opinion on limits of acceptable environmental impact. I am selecting the action alternative for implementation on this project.

Significance of Potential Impacts

I find all identified resource management concerns have been fully addressed in this checklist EA. The action alternative provides for the security of people and wildlife. Specific project design features and various resource management specialist recommendations have been implemented to ensure that this project will fall within the limits of acceptable environmental change and result in no significant effects.

Need for Further Environmental Analysis

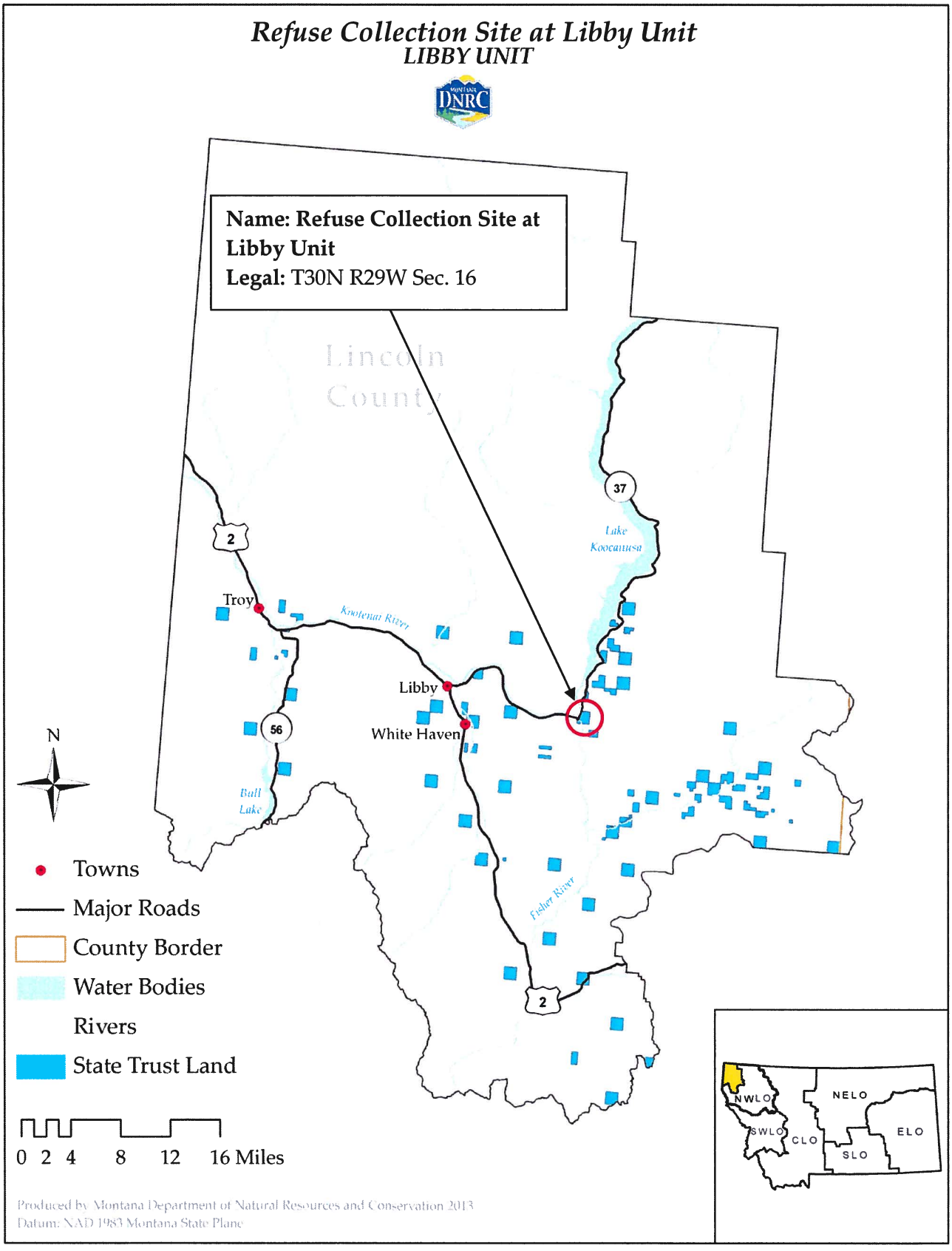
☐	EIS	☐	More Detailed EA	☒	No Further Analysis

Environmental Assessment Checklist Approved By:

Name: Douglas Turman
Title: Libby Unit Manager
Date: October 12, 2016
Signature: Douglas Turman

Attachment A- Maps

A-1: Vicinity Map



A-2: Site specific Map